

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

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1. A magneto-resistive magnetic sensor,
comprising:

10 a magneto-resistive structure changing a
resistance thereof in response to an external magnetic
field,

a cap layer, provided on a top surface of
said magneto-resistive structure;

15 a pair of magnetic regions disposed at both
lateral sides of said magneto-resistive structure,
said magnetic regions having a magnetization pointing
in a common direction;

20 a pair of electrodes provided on said pair
of magnetic regions so as to oppose with each other
across said magneto-resistive structure, said
electrodes having respective overhang parts extending
over said magneto-resistive structure so as to oppose
with each other with a gap therebetween,

25 wherein each of said overhang parts covers
said cap layer on said magneto-resistive structure in
such a state that an oxidation-resistant conductive
layer is interposed between said cap layer and said
overhang part.

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35 2. A magneto-resistive magnetic sensor as
claimed in claim 1, wherein said oxidation-resistant
conducting layer is formed of a metal selected from
the group consisting of Au, Pt and Cu.

3. A magneto-resistive magnetic sensor as claimed in claim 1, wherein said oxidation-resistant conductive layer has a thickness larger than about 1nm.

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4. A magneto-resistive magnetic sensor as
10 claimed in claim 1, wherein said oxidation-resistant
conductive layer has a thickness of larger than about
3nm.

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5. A magneto-resistive magnetic sensor as
claimed in claim 1, wherein said oxidation-resistant
conductive layer has a thickness of smaller than about
10nm.

20 10nm.

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6. A magneto-resistive magnetic sensor as claimed in claim 1, wherein said cap layer comprises Ta.

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claimed in claim 1, wherein said magneto-resistive structure comprises an anti-ferromagnetic pinning layer, a ferromagnetic pinned layer having an exchange coupling with said anti-ferromagnetic pinning layer, a ferromagnetic free layer, and a non-magnetic

separation layer interposed between said ferromagnetic pinned layer and said ferromagnetic free layer.

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8. A method of fabricating a magneto-resistive magnetic sensor, comprising the steps of:

10 forming a magneto-resistive structure on a substrate, said magneto-resistive structure changing a resistance thereof in response to an external magnetic field;

15 depositing a cap layer on a top surface of said magneto-resistive structure;

20 depositing an oxidation-resistant conductive layer on a top surface of said cap layer, said magneto-resistive structure, said cap layer and said oxidation-resistant conductive layer forming thereby a magneto-resistive layer;

25 patterning said magneto-resistive layer by applying a lithographic process, to form a magneto-resistive region on said substrate;

30 depositing a ferromagnetic layer of said substrate to form a pair of domain control regions at both lateral sides of said magneto-resistive region;

35 depositing an electrode layer on said substrate such that said electrode layer covers said magneto-resistive region and said domain control regions continuously;

40 patterning said electrode layer to form a pair of electrodes on said pair of domain control regions respectively, such that said electrodes extend to each other over said magneto-resistive region with a gap formed between said electrodes, said step of patterning being conducted by applying an etching process to said electrode layer until said oxidation-resistant conductive layer is exposed at said gap; and

patterning said oxidation-resistant conductive layer until said cap layer is exposed at said gap.

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9. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein
said step of depositing said oxidation-resistant layer
10 comprises the step of depositing an Au layer as said
oxidation-resistant layer, and wherein said step of
patterning said oxidation-resistant layer comprises a
reactive-ion etching process.

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10. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein
said step of depositing said cap layer comprises the
20 step of depositing a Ta layer as said cap layer, and
wherein said step of patterning said cap layer
comprises an ion milling process.

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11. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein
said step of patterning said oxidation-resistant layer
and said step of patterning said cap layer are
30 conducted by an ion milling process.

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12. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein
said step of patterning said oxidation-resistant layer
and said step of patterning said cap layer are

conducted by using a common resist mask.

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